



# Committee On Finance

Max Baucus, Ranking Member

---

## NEWS RELEASE

<http://finance.senate.gov>

For Immediate Release  
Thursday, July 31, 2003

Contact: Laura Hayes  
202-224-4515

### **Baucus Comments on U.S. Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with Saudi Arabia; Urges the Enactment of a Trade Preference Program for the Middle East**

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) As the Administration today signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement with Saudi Arabia, Baucus made the following comments on the Agreement and pushed for the enactment of a trade preference program for countries in the Middle East:

"Today, the United States signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I am encouraged that the Administration is seeking closer trading ties with countries in the Middle East, but I believe we need to be doing more, and faster.

That's why Senator McCain and I introduced the Middle East Trade and Engagement Act of 2003 earlier this year. The bill would create a trade preference program for the countries of the Middle East. The program is modeled on existing trade preference programs that have successfully stimulated economies, encouraged economic and political reform, and improved U.S. relations in sub-Saharan Africa and the Andean region. Clearly the Middle East is no less important to U.S. interests.

Under the program, countries that meet certain criteria, such as having a market-based economy, supporting the U.S. war on terrorism, and undertaking fundamental reforms would be able to export certain goods to the United States tariff free. This access to the U.S. market would help diversify and improve the economies of the Middle East and create jobs for the rapidly growing population in those countries. In addition, by improving the economies in the Middle East, the program would also increase export opportunities for American businesses and create jobs for American workers.

A network of TIFAs in the Middle East may eventually lead to the Middle East free trade area that the Administration envisions, but so would the program embodied in the Baucus-McCain bill. And the access that countries would get to the U.S. market under the Baucus-McCain bill would help them make the significant economic reforms needed before a free trade agreement can become a realistic option.

In my view, the Baucus-McCain bill is a natural complement to the Administration's Middle East trade initiative. I urge the Administration to work with Senator McCain and me to enact a trade preference program for the countries in the Middle East. Let's work together to extend America's trust and goodwill by opening our markets and helping to strengthen economies throughout the Middle East."

###

